

House Resolution

No. 44

Introduced by Assembly Member Medina

June 5, 2014

House Resolution No. 44—Relative to the Panama Canal.

1 WHEREAS, The Country of Panama is located at the strategic
2 nexus of two globally important trade corridors forming both a
3 land bridge connecting North and South America, and controls the
4 Panama Canal, which links the North Atlantic Ocean, through the
5 Caribbean Sea, with the North Pacific Ocean; and

6 WHEREAS, With the backing of the United States, Panama
7 seceded from Colombia in 1903 and signed a treaty with the United
8 States allowing for the construction of the canal; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1904 the United States took over construction
10 of the canal from the French, and opened it as a transcontinental
11 passage on August 15, 1914. Ownership of the Canal transferred
12 from the United States to Panama in 1999. The Panama Canal is
13 a true engineering marvel of the early 20th Century, lifting ships
14 26 meters up to and down from Gatun Lake through the use of
15 electric mini-locomotive “mules;” and

16 WHEREAS, The construction of the Panama Canal cost
17 approximately four hundred million dollars (\$400,000,000) and
18 resulted in the loss of over 25,000 lives, but opened a route across
19 the Isthmus of Panama through the ports at Panama City and Colón
20 that saves ships, which must navigate between the Pacific and
21 Atlantic Oceans to reach their ports of destination, days at sea and
22 13,000 kilometers of travel; and

23 WHEREAS, Plans were made for a grand celebration to mark
24 the official opening of the Panama Canal on August 15, 1914,

1 including the launching of an international fleet of warships on
2 New Year's Day 1915, from Hampton Roads, Virginia, which
3 would then have traveled through the Panama Canal and arrived
4 in San Francisco for the opening of the Panama-Pacific
5 International Exposition, a world's fair- like celebration; and

6 WHEREAS, The beginning of World War I caused the
7 cancellation of the grand festivities at the canal, and a more modest
8 ceremony was held whereby a simple cargo boat, the SS Ancon,
9 piloted by Captain John A. Constantine, made the first official
10 canal transit, without the anticipated crowd of international
11 dignitaries in attendance; and

12 WHEREAS, The Panama-Pacific International Exposition took
13 place as planned between February 20 and December 4, 1915,
14 providing both an opportunity to celebrate the completion of the
15 Panama Canal and for San Francisco to showcase its recovery
16 from the 1906 earthquake. While the Palace of Fine Arts is the
17 only building still standing from the exposition, among the exhibits
18 at the exposition highlighting the new east-west route were the
19 first steam locomotive purchased by Southern Pacific Railroad,
20 which is now on display at the California State Railroad Museum
21 in Sacramento, the Liberty Bell, which traveled by train on a
22 nationwide tour from Pennsylvania, and a telephone line that was
23 established from the exposition to New York, enabling people
24 across the country to hear the Pacific Ocean; and

25 WHEREAS, In 1913 the United States Post Office issued a set
26 of four postage stamps to commemorate San Francisco's
27 Panama-Pacific International Exposition with designs depicting a
28 profile of Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1¢), the Pedro Miguel Locks
29 of the Panama Canal (2¢), the Golden Gate (5¢), and the discovery
30 of San Francisco Bay (10¢), and reissued the stamps in 1914 and
31 1915. The United States Congress also authorized the San
32 Francisco Mint to issue a series of five commemorative coins
33 consisting of the 1915S silver Panama-Pacific half-dollar and four
34 gold coins; and

35 WHEREAS, The Panama-California Exposition was held at
36 Balboa Park in San Diego, California, from March 9, 1915, to
37 January 1, 1917, to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal,
38 and to highlight San Diego's location as the first American port
39 of call for northbound ships that passed westward through the
40 Panama Canal. Several of the buildings constructed for the

1 Panama-California Exposition, including the Cabrillo Bridge, the
2 California Bell Tower, the California State Exposition Building,
3 and other related buildings that are maintained by the San Diego
4 Museum of Man, still stand today as historic landmarks and as
5 symbols of the 100-year history California shares with Panama
6 and as symbols of trade; and

7 WHEREAS, California's two-trillion-dollar economy is the
8 eighth largest economy in the world, and has benefited from
9 increased international trade provided for by the use of the Panama
10 Canal, contributions from immigrants from Panama, and new
11 investments by foreign businesses and entrepreneurs; and

12 WHEREAS, Now after operating for almost 100 years, over 13
13 thousand ships use the Panama Canal annually, making it one of
14 the main maritime trade routes, and connecting more than 140
15 maritime routes through 1,700 ports and 160 countries, which are
16 primarily used by the United States, China, Chile, Japan, and South
17 Korea; and

18 WHEREAS, Panamanians approved an ambitious plan, which
19 is estimated to cost five billion three hundred million dollars, to
20 double the capacity of the canal by 2015, strengthening the global
21 goods movement network and supporting direct trade between
22 Panama and the United States; now, therefore, be it

23 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That on the
24 occasion of the 100th anniversary of the completion of the Panama
25 Canal and the 495th anniversary of the founding of Panama City,
26 there is a cause for reflection and celebration of the unique and
27 beneficial relationship between the United States and Panama, and
28 there is a call for a renewed commitment to enhancing the
29 economic, cultural, and trade relationships between the State of
30 California and the Country of Panama; and be it further

31 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
32 of this resolution to the President of Panama and to the author for
33 appropriate distribution.